

Frederick George Lee, from the Author.

THE

PASTOR'S CLAIMS TO THE REMEMBRANCE
OF HIS FLOCK.

A SERMON,

PREACHED AT

ST. JOHN'S CHAPEL, ST. MARYLEBONE,

The 13th Sunday after Trinity, 1854,

In Memory

OF

THE REV. THOMAS WHARTON, M.A.

LATE INCUMBENT OF THE CHAPEL.

BY DANIEL BUTLER, M.A.

ASSISTANT MINISTER.

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St John's Wood
13 Oct. 1854

My dear Lee

Many thanks for
your Volume - which
I am very glad
to meet in our
CO Library.

I send you, with
much pleasure, a

THE following Sermon is published, not for any supposed merits of its own, but as a tribute of sincere respect to the memory of one with whom the writer was long associated in the work of the ministry; and in the hope that it may help, by God's blessing, to render the remembrance of a pastor's good example profitable to his flock.

A SERMON,

ETC. ETC.

HEB. XIII. 7.

Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.

IT is plain, from the concluding words of this precept, that the rulers, or ‘guides,’ as they are more accurately designated in the margin, whom the Hebrew Christians are charged to ‘remember,’ had now finished their course of earthly service, and entered into rest. By ‘the end of their conversation,’ is meant not the *aim* of their life, but its *issue*,—the conclusion or result of that holding fast their profession, for which, as well as for the holy doctrine which they taught, they ought to be had in remembrance. This ‘end of their conversation’ was to some of the earliest of these guides of Christ’s flock no other than the martyr’s crown. It was so to St. James, the first Bishop of the Hebrew Christian Church, to whom there is probably a special reference here intended. But whether they were called to witness unto death for Christ, or had been peacefully gathered to their rest, it was meet and

right that those whom they had been appointed to *guide* in the way of salvation, should hold their memory dear, and keep alive in their hearts the sense of the inestimable benefits imparted through their ministry to their souls. If the services of an earthly benefactor are not to be forgotten as soon as he is laid low in the grave—if we do not put away from our thoughts, when death has withdrawn them from our sight, the friends whom we loved or honoured in their life—how much more should those be remembered with reverent and enduring affection who were God's chosen instruments for making known to us the way of life—from whose lips were heard the 'words whereby we might be saved'—at whose hands we received 'the washing of regeneration,' and were fed throughout the years of our pilgrimage with the blessed 'bread of life.' There was indeed to this primitive generation of the Hebrew Christians a reason of special weight and cogency for remembering those who had been their 'guides' in the faith and obedience of the Gospel—for these were either Apostles, as, *e. g.*, St. James already adverted to—who were themselves guided, in all that they taught and ordained in the Churches, by immediate inspiration of the Holy Ghost, or they were men divinely gifted, though called to a ministry of lower degree, as was St. Stephen, one of the seven deacons, and the first fruits of the noble army of martyrs—

or else they were at least men who were 'sent' by the Apostles to their work, who had themselves sat at the feet of the Apostles, and were followers of them 'in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity'—even as they were of Christ. Such were the guides whom it concerned the Hebrews personally to remember—nor yet the Hebrews only, to whom this inspired Epistle was primarily addressed, but Christians of every age, as they are all partakers of the benefit of which these inspired or apostolic guides were chosen to be the first dispensers—so are they bound to hold their names in honourable remembrance, and to take care that the same dutiful observance be continued towards them by those who come after. Such, indeed, has been the feeling, as we should naturally expect it to be, of universal Christendom from the earliest times. It has been supposed that the custom of setting days apart for the commemoration of the saints departed, was suggested by the text we are now considering. At all events, if it was prompted by a natural piety, it is clearly sanctioned by these words of inspiration. And in the intention of the Church, however imperfectly such intention may have been fulfilled in the practice of her members, it is not a mere sentimental remembrance of those who have shone like lights in the world which is commended to us, but such as may help, by God's

grace, to quicken our own steps in the way of holiness, and render us more diligent followers of them who, through faith and patience, now inherit the promises. In her appointment of Saints' days, the Church evinces her concern not only or chiefly for the honour due to the departed, but at least as fully for the spiritual advancement of the living. Thus, in the Collect for All Saints' Day—when she gathers into one general commemoration the whole multitude, such as no man can number, of the faithful departed—we are taught to pray that God would grant us grace *so to follow His blessed Saints in all virtuous and godly living*, that we may come to those unspeakable joys, which He hath prepared for them that unfeignedly love Him, through Jesus Christ our Lord. And the same practical design of ministering edification to her children, is no less observable in the Collects of those days on which the Apostles and Evangelists are separately commemorated. Thus, to take only one example, that of St. Andrew, the first in the calendar, after making mention of the ready obedience of this Apostle to the calling of Christ, we pray, 'Grant unto us all, that we, being called by thy holy word, may forthwith give up ourselves obediently to fulfil thy holy commandments, through Jesus Christ our Lord.' Who will doubt, brethren, that if we were careful after this manner to 'remember' the holy Apostles of our Lord, or other saints who, by the power of His grace, have adorned His

doctrine in their lives, and glorified Him in their deaths; if we would give diligence, as the text counsels us, to follow their faith, as it was variously manifested in their several histories, learning from each example its own special lesson, copying one by one the graces by which these saints and servants of the Lord were severally most distinguished, and withal 'considering the end of their conversation,' contemplating the blessed and glorious issue to which their life and faithful obedience did at last conduct them,—that their labours were not in vain in the Lord,—that He who began a good work in them, performed it unto the end, and brought them at length to the haven where they would be,—if with such thoughts as these we accustomed ourselves to note the recurrence of these days of sacred commemoration, who will doubt that we should be rising to a higher mark of spiritual proficiency than is now commonly attained by us—that we should be more possessed with the sacredness of our Christian calling—more careful to rule ourselves, in all the details of our everyday life, after God's word—to walk, in a word, as becometh saints—to be Christians, not only in name, or by profession and privilege, but in deed and in truth?

But the application of the precept before us is not to be limited to the remembrance of the glorious company of the Apostles or other chief rulers of the infant Church, though it certainly warrants that

solemn commemoration of them which has ever obtained in the Church. Except in respect of that special inspiration which was the exclusive privilege of the Apostles, the pastor's office is the same now as it was when the words of our text were indited. As the spiritual needs of Christ's people are, in all essential points, the same in every age, so is there the same gracious provision for their supply. Whensoever, therefore, it pleases God to call unto Himself, one who has been labouring faithfully in the work of the ministry, then especially does it concern those amongst whom his ministry was exercised, to regard these words as written for their admonition, and to believe that He who spoke to them by the mouth of His servant, the words of peace and salvation, is now calling them, no less distinctly, by the sorrowful associations of his departure hence, to a more entire dedication of themselves to His blessed service—a more earnest following after holiness—a more diligent walking in the steps of that faith, which he who was their appointed guide, was wont to commend to them with his lips; and in so far as he was true to his sacred calling, to exhibit in its sanctifying influences, for their imitation, in his life.

Unto you, then, brethren, is this word of exhortation spoken at this present time. He who, for thirty years, has ministered faithfully amongst you is now resting from his labours. After many weeks of painful suffering, borne with humble and

patient resignation to the Divine will, though not without a wakeful interest in all that concerned the duties of his sacred office, and the spiritual well-doing of his flock—not without many an earnest wish, if God might be pleased to grant it, to resume his public ministrations and to be occupied again, as he had so long been accustomed, in works of charity and usefulness, for the benefit of his poor neighbours ;—after this long period of suffering, but with an interval at the last, as we hear with thankfulness, of some days of comparative ease, or rather, perhaps, of painless exhaustion, he calmly yielded up his soul to God, and is now, we rejoice to believe, a partaker in that blessedness, of which he has often discoursed to you from this place—the blessedness of those who die in the Lord. My brethren, it may be thought a needless exhortation which bids you to remember one whose ministry in this place was extended over so long a period, numbering more years than the lives of many whom I am now addressing, who was not more widely known to the inhabitants of this neighbourhood than he was respected and admired for the unpretending consistency of his character—his charity, in word and deed—his love of peace—his sympathy with the sorrowful—his cheerful participation in the joys of others, notwithstanding the loneliness, so saddening in some of its circumstances, which was the portion of his later years. With many of you the memory of your deceased

Pastor will be associated with the most sacred and eventful occasions of your life—with the baptism, doubtless, of some ; with the confirmation of many more ; some of you have been united by his hands in holy matrimony ; to many he has ministered in the time of their sickness and tribulation ; and when you have been following the remains of a beloved friend to their last resting-place, from his lips you have heard the words of blessed consolation by which the Church so tenderly greets her faithful children in that hour of their anguish and distress. How, then, should you not remember one who is associated by so many sacred and touching recollections with your own past experience ? Or, again, how is it likely that there can be any other than a wide and lasting remembrance of one whose ministry has been signalized by the foundation, under his auspices, and mainly through his exertions, of so many institutions of large and permanent usefulness to the poor who are dwelling in the midst of us ? Here, indeed, in these works of Christian benevolence ; in the schools, and the dispensary, and other kindred institutions, now happily united in the same local habitation, (for which advantage, also, they are indebted, in no small measure, to the untiring personal exertions of your late Pastor)—here is a monument of his ministrations, than which none can be more suitable or more honourable to the servant of Christ, none more effectual, we must believe, in

preserving his memory, and calling down blessings on his name, even to distant generations.

Assuredly, then, brethren, if remembrance were all that was required of you towards him whose loss we are now lamenting, it is sufficiently secured by your own personal recollections of the departed, and by the numerous public memorials of his Christian zeal and faithfulness, which exist around us. But a relation so sacred as that which subsists between a Christian pastor and his flock demands of us something more than remembrance, however lasting and affectionate; something more than sentiments of esteem and respect, however cordial and deeply-seated they may be. We are charged in the text, not only to remember those who have had the rule over us, who have spoken unto us the word of God, but also to ‘follow their faith, considering the end of their conversation.’ It will be of little avail, brethren, that you remember him who has so long and so faithfully ministered in the midst of you, unless you are careful to practise the lessons of holiness which he taught with his lips, and exemplified in his life. I am well assured that this is the truth which he himself would desire to be enforced upon you by his decease. He would have but little said of his own labours or his own virtues, and that little only for the sake of moving you to greater diligence in the work of your salvation—that, as you have received of him how you ought to

walk and to please God, so you would abound more and more.

Suffer me then, brethren, earnestly to remind you of your own serious responsibility in respect of that ministry of your lamented Pastor, which for so many years has been exercised among you, and which has now, by the ordering of an all-wise Providence, been brought to a close. As he is gone to give account of his stewardship, so is there an account to be rendered, by every one of you, of the opportunities you have enjoyed, through his ministrations, of being made wise unto salvation; an account of his teaching, and of his example, how far they have served the end for which they were granted to you, in the turning you from sin to holiness, from the power of Satan unto God. With the most absolute reliance upon the merits of Christ his Saviour, he ever remembered for himself, and earnestly enforced upon his hearers, the necessity of pureness and holiness of living, as the only preparation for heavenly joys, the only sure evidence of a saving faith. See, then, brethren, if this be so indeed with yourselves; let not the impressions of this occasion of sadness pass away, without some practical and abiding benefit to your souls, some earnest resolutions and steadfast endeavours, in dependence upon God's grace, to serve Him more heartily, more unreservedly: henceforth, to order your lives in conformity with the law of Christ,

that you may evermore abide in Him, and He in you, and so may be enabled to rejoice in Him with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

One word of practical counsel you will suffer me to press upon you in conclusion. I have adverted to the charitable institutions of Portland Town as the monument by which the memory of your late Pastor cannot fail to be long and gratefully cherished in this district; but this supposes that the works of mercy of which he laid the foundation, and which he contributed so effectually to sustain, while health and strength were vouchsafed to him, shall be maintained in their full efficiency, and extended according to the growing wants of the population, in years to come. His voice will no more be heard inviting you to bear your part in this blessed work of ministering to the necessity of your brethren, his example of patient continuance in well-doing will be no longer before your eyes, to add force to his exhortations, and to win your hearts to a willing sympathy; but if your remembrance of your Pastor be not a mere barren sentiment, or transient emotion, you will surely be not less, but more, concerned than in time past, to carry on these good works, and to provide, by means of them, the largest possible amount of succour and consolation to your needy and afflicted brethren.

There is one only availing consolation in thinking of departed friends, the persuasion, namely, that

they are at rest with Christ, accompanied by a well-grounded hope, that we, through God's infinite mercy, shall one day go to them, and be with them for ever ; but, as this happy persuasion is only warranted of those who die in the Lord, so must our own hope of being reunited with those we have lost, rest altogether upon this condition, that we are 'abiding in Christ.' Be this then, brethren, to every one of you, your constant, foremost care ; be content with nothing less than a true and living union with Christ your Lord ; to this end wait upon Him continually in the ordinances of His grace ; draw near with a loving faith, whenever the opportunity is before you, to partake of the Holy Sacrament of His body and blood ; and withal remember always, that if you be indeed abiding in Christ, you *must* be abounding more and more in all those good works which God hath prepared for us to walk in. Yea, remember it is His own divine teaching which warns us, 'He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit.'

THE END.

